

CONTACT:

BUYING RECYCLED COMPLETES LIFE CYCLE

Buying products made from recycled materials is an important step in supporting recycling and resource conservation programs.

Sorting materials into your recycling bin is only the first step in the process. After the materials are collected and processed, they are sent to a buyer, or an end-market. This market takes the recyclables and processes them into new products that return to store shelves. When you buy a product with recycled content, you help create a demand for that item and ensure that recycling companies always have a market for their materials.

Read labels and be informed

Take a few seconds to look at the product to see whether the container or packaging contains recycled content. This may be as simple as checking the nutrition label or ingredient list on a box of food. Look for the products and packaging with the highest percentage of recycled content. Also, check to see if the product or packaging can be reused or recycled after you're through with it.

What does recyclable mean?

The term "recyclable" refers to products that can be used again in the manufacture of new products rather than being disposed of as waste. Although many manufacturers mark their items recyclable, this doesn't automatically make them so. Depending on your local recycling program's rules, you may or may not be able to recycle them locally. Materials that are accepted are recyclable only if you separate them from your trash for local recycling collections.

Pre-consumer vs. post-consumer

Pre-consumer refers to waste items that are generated in the production stages of manufacturing. These materials have not yet reached the consumer and take the form of damaged products, material trimmings or production over-runs. Manufacturers have been reusing pre-consumer waste for many decades because it saves them money. Recycling and reuse of these pre-consumer materials also saves landfill space and virgin resources.

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Post-consumer material comes from items that have been used and discarded by consumers, collected through recycling efforts and sold to manufacturers. You'll find this term mainly on paper and plastic products. By purchasing products with the highest percentage of post-consumer recycled content available, you increase the market for recycled materials and reduce the use of virgin materials.

If you want to adopt some recycling friendly practices, try these:

Buy Smart. Take some time to think before you buy something – maybe you don't really need it. Perhaps you can think of an alternative to buying a product, such as sending free e-cards instead of paper birthday cards to family and friends.

Buy Durable Products. Instead of buying disposable products, which are wasteful, buy things that will last a long time, such as rechargeable batteries and reusable mugs for drinks.

Avoid Excess Packaging. Look for products that have less packaging or buy in bulk – you'll have less to throw away. Also, buy items with packaging that can be reused or recycled.

Buy Used. Buying things that have been previously used means your purchase doesn't require additional resources or energy. Consider how items that you currently own, but no longer need, can be re-used. Retro clothes, room accessories and sports equipment are often welcomed at your local thrift store. Shop online or at local stores to buy used CDs and books.

Buy Energy-efficient. Look for the ENERGY STAR logo when buying electronics such as TVs, CD players, DVD players, and computers. ENERGY STAR is a national program designed to identify and promote energy-efficient products.

Buy Recycled. Buying items made with recycled-content materials means that fewer natural resources were used to produce them. Products made from recycled paper, plastic and other materials are usually easy to recognize in the store – just read the labels.

Your purchase will make a difference. Buying green lets companies know you care about the environmental impact of the products you buy. Why would big corporations care what you think? Because your current and future purchasing power is extremely important to them. Companies spend \$12 billion a year marketing their products. Shopping green sends a message to them that you care about the environment – and they should also.